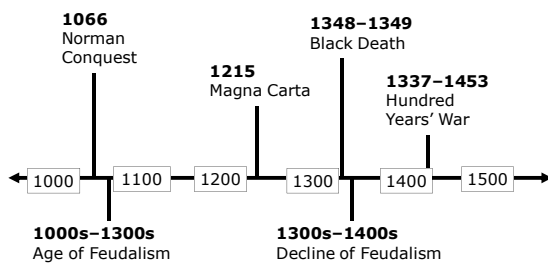


The Middle Ages: 1066–1485: Introduction to the Literary Period

The Canterbury Tales Prologue

The Middle Ages: 1066–1485



The Norman Conquest of 1066: William the Conqueror

- a duke from Normandy, France
- claimed the English throne had been promised to him
- crossed the English Channel with a huge army
- defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings

William the Conqueror

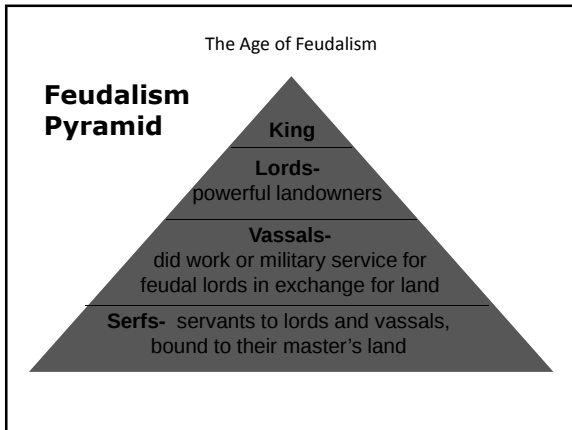
- cousin of the English king Edward the Confessor.
- As a soldier, efficient and ruthless.
- As a ruler, emphasized law, order, cultural unity.
- One of William's great administrative feats was an inventory of nearly every piece of property in England—cattle, buildings—the Domesday Book.
- The survey established a social hierarchy that was recognized for centuries.

The Norman Conquest: Changes in England

- land divided among William's followers from Normandy
- more contact with European civilization
- a new language becomes popular at court—**French**
- a new social system: **feudalism**, an economic, political, and social system in medieval Europe, in which land was held by vassals in exchange for military and other services

The Age of Feudalism

- social, property, and military system
- based on a religious concept of rank
- some vassals appointed by king in return for loyalty
- lords (powerful vassals) appoint their own vassals
- The king is at the top, with the most power. The serfs, who have no power at all, are at the bottom. The serfs made up the majority of England's population and could not leave the land to which they were assigned.



- The Age of Feudalism: Knights in Shining Armor
- provided military service to lords
 - often the sons of nobles
 - began training at an early age
 - usually only option available to males who didn't inherit estates
 - wore very heavy armor into battle
 - followed a code of chivalry
 - romanticized in literature as ideal Christians males

- The Code of Chivalry
- A code of conduct that covered
- how to treat a lady— courtly love
 - whom to defend: knight's lord, the king, the Christian faith, the defenseless
 - how to help others
 - how to resist the urge to run away if captured

Courtly Love

The knight

- adored the lady and was inspired by her
- glorified the lady in words

The lady

- remained pure and out of reach
- was set above her admirer

The Romance

- new genre of literature
- inspired by legends of chivalrous knights
- hero goes on a quest in order to conquer an evil enemy
- hero often has magical help
- includes stories of distant, idealized courtly love

The Crusades (1095—1270)

- series of holy wars
- waged by European Christians against Muslims in the Middle East

The Crusades (1095—1270): Results I

- ultimately unsuccessful, but Europeans benefit from contact with middle eastern civilization

Examples of sophisticated culture to which Europeans were exposed include

- public libraries in Damascus and Baghdad
- wealthy cities such as Cairo providing links to spice trade

The Crusades (1095—1270): Results II

- Arabic civilization had inherited the knowledge of the Roman empire, and preserved it. They were far advanced compared to Europe, and Crusaders & pilgrims were exposed to
 - universities such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the oldest universities in the world
 - medical knowledge—first accurate study of smallpox and measles

The Magna Carta

1215

- Magna Carta*—“Great Charter”
- signed by King John, under pressure from English barons
- protected rights of aristocrats
- meant a return to more democratic tendencies; foundation for Republics

No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way harmed, nor will we go upon him nor will we send upon him, except by the legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.
To none will we sell, to none deny or delay, right or justice.
—Magna Carta, clauses 39 and 40

Growth of Cities and Towns

- townspeople no longer tied to master's land or to knighthood
- merchant class—people earn their own money
- city people's tastes influence arts—ballads, miracle plays, and so on

Monetary System

Before the Crusades

- foreign coins are melted down
- few coins exist
- feudal lords make coins for use on their own property only
- serfs use barter system (trade one item for another, such as meat for clothing)

Monetary System

After the Crusades

- gold coins are used, because Crusaders & Pilgrims needed non-perishable ways to buy items (gold was valued in every society)
- peasants can earn gold in exchange for labor or goods
- peasants can save money, have greater buying and selling power; England's economy begins to blossom.

The Black Death, 1348–1349

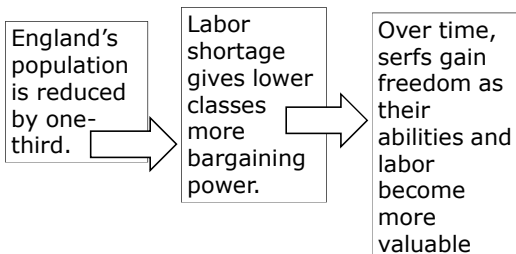
Black Death (bubonic plague)

- highly contagious, fatal disease, spread by the fleas on infected rats
- crowded cities made spread of disease very easy
- Medieval people thought the disease was caused by a strange aligning of the planets, by earthquakes in central Asia, or by a Jewish conspiracy to weaken Christian countries.
- factor in decline of feudalism

The Black Death aka Bubonic Plague

- The symptoms of the bubonic plague included
 - blotches on the skin
 - hardening and swelling of the glands under the armpit or in the groin
 - delirium
 - insanity

The Black Death Kills Feudalism



The Hundred Years' War 1337–1453

- war between England and France
- England unsuccessful
- leads to British national consciousness

Yeoman

- small landowners with longbows
- become dominant force (instead of knights)

Yeoman

After the war, the English were no longer best represented by the knight in shining armor (an import from the Continent). Instead, they were represented by the green-clad yeomen, who had formed the nucleus of the English army. Their yard-long arrows could fly over castle walls and pierce the armor of knights.
